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MANAGEMENT OF GROWING CHICKS

BOYS AND GIRLS POULTRY CLUB WORK

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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ANIMAL HUSBANDRY DIVISION
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MANAGEMENT OF GROWING CHICKS.

THE care of growing chicks, especially during very warm weather, is most important, and every boy or girl who is a member of a poultry club or is raising chickens should give them the best of care at this time if he or she wishes to succeed. The baby chicks may be smart little fellows from strong, vigorous parent stock, and they may have been brooded carefully for the first two or three weeks, but unless they receive proper care and management during their later growing period they will not develop properly, and many of them will be lost through sickness or disease.

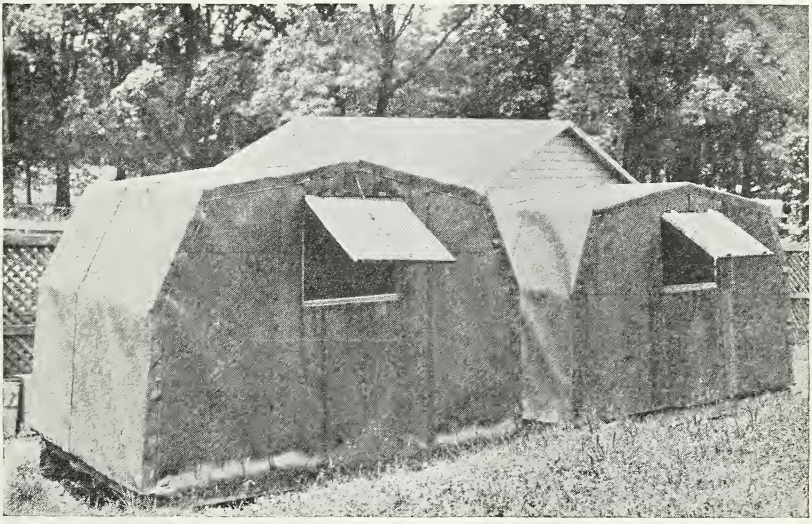

FIG. 1.—Rear view of two houses, each made from two piano boxes, for growing chicks. The entrance door is in front. Note the ventilating window, which is protected by the raised wooden shutter.

ESSENTIALS TO PROPER GROWTH.

The chief essentials to proper growth are good coops or houses, cleanliness, proper feed and water, shade, and free range.

Coops and houses.—Growing chicks should be provided with large, roomy coops or houses which will give them a comfortable place to stay at night and during stormy weather. No particular kind of house is necessary, but it should be so built that it will provide the chicks with lots of light, pure air, and sunshine, and protect them from dampness and storms of all kinds. It also should be arranged so that it can be cleaned easily and frequently, which is very important.

If brood coops are used, do not let too many chicks go into one coop at night, as crowding will cause them to become overheated, resulting in improper growth and sometimes in dead chicks. As the season advances and the chicks become larger, some should be removed and placed in other coops to prevent crowding. When possible, it is best to provide larger quarters. A good house can be built from dry-goods and piano boxes at a small cost. The houses shown in figure 1 were built from two piano boxes and covered with tar paper to keep out the rain, making very satisfactory quarters. In a house of this sort the same care should be taken as in brood coops not to crowd the chicks.

Cleanliness.—Every coop and poultry house used for growing chicks should be kept clean at all times. Sickness or disease usually starts in unclean quarters, and in such quarters lice and mites are always more plentiful. The coops and houses should be cleaned and sprayed once a week, and clean shavings, chaff, or sand put on the floor. Examine the chicks and houses often for lice and mites, and if found they should be got rid of at once by following the directions in Department Circular 16, "Lice, Mites, and Cleanliness."

FEEDS AND WATER.

A variety of feeds, with fresh, clean water, is necessary if chicks are to grow properly. Perhaps the three most necessary for rapid growth are grain feed, green feed, and dry mash.

Grain feed.—In addition to the green feed and dry mash, which should be provided regularly, a grain mixture should be fed night and morning, giving as large a quantity as the chicks will eat clean, but no more. A good grain mixture for growing chicks consists of 3 parts cracked corn, 2 parts wheat, and 2 parts hulled oats. When available, kafir corn or rolled or hulled barley may be substituted for hulled oats. In localities where hulled oats, kafir corn, or rolled barley can not be obtained, or is too high in price, a mixture of cracked corn and wheat only may be fed until the chicks are old enough to eat whole oats, when 2 parts oats may be added to the corn and wheat mixture.

Green feed.—A reasonable supply of fresh green feed is almost as necessary as grain for growing chicks if they are to develop properly. If allowed liberty they will obtain much of it for themselves, but if kept in confinement or in quarters where green feed is not abundant, it should be supplied them regularly. Lawn grass, beet tops, cabbage, and lettuce make excellent feeds. When chicks are confined to brood coops with runs, they should be placed on ground where the grass is green and tender, and as fast as it is eaten off the coop and run should be moved to a place where the grass is plentiful.

Dry mash.—In addition to grain and green feeds, dry mash should be kept before growing chicks at all times after they are three or four weeks old. It is best to feed it in a hopper inside the building or where it will not be exposed to rain or wet. If a large number of chicks are raised, the mash may be fed in an outdoor hopper (figure 2). The following mixture makes a good dry mash: Two pounds corn meal, 2 pounds middlings, 1 pound oatmeal, 2 pounds wheat bran, 1 pound beef scrap, and one-fourth pound charcoal. When a larger quantity is desired it should be mixed in the same proportion.

Also grit and oyster shell should be provided, so that the chicks may help themselves whenever they wish.

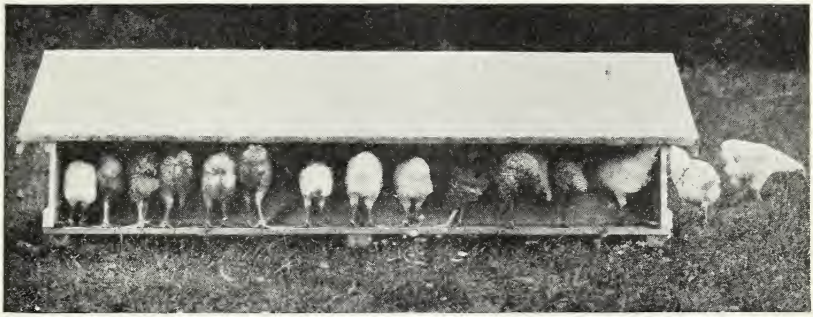

FIG. 2.—A help-yourself hopper for feeding dry mash outdoors. The hinged sloping cover permits filling the hopper, protects the contents, and shelters the chicks.

Sour milk.—Nothing is better for growing chicks than a liberal supply of sour milk. If it can be obtained, it always should be kept before them in an open dish or pan where they can eat and drink it freely. Where sour milk is fed, the amount of beef scrap in the dry mash may be reduced one-half.

Water.—Plenty of fresh, clean water is absolutely necessary for all growing chicks. In hot weather, it should be given twice daily and put into fountains or dishes and placed in the shade so as to keep as cool as possible. Clean the water dish thoroughly each day before filling.

Range and shade.—An abundance of free range with plenty of shade is necessary if chicks are to grow rapidly and develop into vigorous fowls. Growing chicks that have free range obtain quantities of green feed, bugs, worms, and other things, therefore requiring less grain, and they are also less liable to sickness or disease. Give your chicks free range whenever possible.

KEEP STANDARD-BRED POULTRY.

Standard-bred poultry is more uniform in size, type, and color.

Standard-bred poultry is more attractive in appearance and appeals more strongly to purchasers of stock and eggs.

Standard-bred poultry offers a greater combination of practical and utility qualities suitable to the needs of the farmer and poultry keeper.

Standard-bred products are more uniform in quality, are in greater demand, and bring better prices.

Standard-bred poultry means greater success and better profits.